

Final Report
National Public Health Week (April 4-10, 2005)
"Walk and Talk With a Vet"

SUMMARY

Ten medical centers, ten VISNs, and VACO responded with the requested feedback describing their voluntary activities in support of National Public Health Week (see list below). The event reached over 1,030 veterans, staff, volunteers, and visitors. The typical innovation, enthusiasm and energy shown in VHA demonstrates the degree of dedication that can be found in VA employees – noting that all participation was voluntary, without rewards except personal satisfaction in doing something for the organization -- a justifiable source of pride and bragging rights for VA leadership, and something we must remember to never take for granted.

THEME. This year's theme for National Public Health Week was "Walk and Talk With a Vet." This wellness activity was designed to promote staff and veteran verbal interaction and physical participation in a walk, as staff shared one preventive health tip with the veteran, and the veteran shared a story with the staff person.

Materials.

The following items, all of which were available on the VA National Center for Health Promotion and Disease Prevention (NCP) website, were disseminated to facilitate organization of, and participation in, this activity:

1. A booklet of health promotion handouts focusing on ways to promote "Live Stronger, Longer."
2. A handout entitled "Health Tips" with a list of prevention strategies for staff to share with veterans during their walk.
3. A nametag sticker to use to promote the activity the week of the event.
4. A logo to use to promote the event.
5. Posters to be used in advance to promote the event.
6. A certificate of participation to share with veterans and staff.

Key Coordinators.

While it would take pages to pinpoint all the key players, we'd at least like to recognize the personnel at each facility who were the initial foci for the success of the event.

VISN	Facility	Point of Contact	Hospital Director
8	Miami, FL	Lourdes Martinez-Cox	Steven Lucas
9	Mountain Home, TN	Phyllis Fisher	Carl Gerber
11	Indianapolis, IN	Betty Dameron	Susan Bowers
12	North Chicago, IL	Colleen Smoger	Patrick Sullivan

16	Fayetteville, AR	Mona Benson	Michael Winn
17	San Antonio, TX	Bertram Lindo	Jose Coronado
19	Salt Lake City, UT	Stephen Harmon, Rebecca Goldsmith	James Floyd
20	White City, OR	Karen Allen	Max McIntosh
21	San Francisco, CA	Carol Ceresa	Sheila Cullen
23	Sioux Falls, SD	Shirley Redmond	Joseph Dalpaiz
VACO	VHA	Amy Hertz	Dr. Perlin
VACO	VBA	Janice Jacobs	
VACO	Asst Sec'ty/ Management	Mary Elliott	
VACO	NCA	Robin Cooper	
VACO	OCLA	Harriet Singleton	
VACO	HR&A	Nigel Collie	
VACO	OI&T	Paunee Grupe, Jennifer Duncan	

A detailed description of activities and pictures/posters from the participants are attached.



Steven Yevich, MD, MPH
Director, NCP

VISN 8

Name of Facility: Miami, FL VAMC

Facility Point of Contact: Lourdes Martinez-Cox (Lourdes.Martinez@med.va.gov)

Phone Number(s): 305-575-7000 ext. 3775

Number of veterans involved: (please see description)

Number of staff involved: 3

Brief description of activities during PH Week: We attempted to hold the walk and talk with a vet. We set up a table with information on MOVE for patients and employees; patient class instructors and employee wellness staff were present to answer questions about MOVE; we had a display on weight management benefits and risks, coupled with handouts about starting a walking program.

Although we did not have people interested in walking we did get both staff and patients come to the table and ask about our programs. We hope to try next year again.

VISN 9

Name of Facility: Mountain Home, TN VAMC

Facility Point of Contact: Phyllis Fisher

Phone Number(s): 423-926-1171 ext. 2377

Number of veterans involved: none

Number of staff involved: 230

Brief description of activities during PH Week: Employee Health Fair (our first in many years at this facility). Opportunities throughout the day – demo's (exercise); nutrition – emphasis on low fat, exercise calorie counting. Sunscreen/melanoma info; free glucometers; blood pressure evaluation/cardiology updates – advice, women's health info, nutritious foods exhibit, book exchange, free lipid panel for month of April! Safety ergonomics and street drug info. Certificate for CME.



VISN 11

Name of Facility: Richard L. Roudebush VA Medical Center, Indianapolis, IN

Facility Point of Contact: Betty Dameron, RN, Chief, Clinic Operations

Phone Number(s): 317-554-0000, extension 2656

Number of veterans involved: Unknown

Number of staff involved: 15

Brief description of activities during PH Week: Flyers were sent with appointment letters encouraging self-assessment and identification of potential health risks.

In addition, a large banner was displayed in the atrium of the medical center for two weeks.

Nurses in the clinics were educated to assist patients with implementation of their plans.

VISN 12

Name of Facility: Veterans Affairs Medical Center North Chicago, Illinois

Facility Point of Contact: Colleen M. Smoger, Administrative Assistant
Patient/Nursing Services Office (118)

Phone Number(s): 224-610-3203

Number of veterans involved: 47

Number of staff involved: 47

Brief description of activities during PH Week:

The North Chicago VA Medical Center staff celebrated National Public Health Week by holding a "Walk and Talk" with a Vet event on Friday, April 8, 2005. Forty-seven employees participated and were paired with 23 veterans from Mental Health Units and 24 veterans from Skilled Geriatric Rehabilitation Center Units. Employees were encouraged to talk with their partner about their experiences in the military and to share one "healthy living" tip. Certificates of Participation were given to both the employee and veteran pair.

A staff member stated, "This is absolutely a dynamite idea. It helps us exercise and gives these patients a wonderful chance to get outside and to feel special." Plans are being developed by the Employee Wellness Committee to continue "Walk and Talk" with a Vet events throughout the spring/summer months. Interested employees are asked to watch for additional information.

The following are excerpts taken from comments received from employees who participated in the Walk and Talk with a Veteran Event, which was held on Friday, April 8, 2005:

I am touched beyond words by the effect this simple initiative had on the patient and staff participants. This could be our best "customer service" project yet!

My veteran and I had a very pleasant walk. On the way back my veteran asked to stop at the cafeteria and thoroughly enjoyed a small dish of cottage cheese and diet soda – not even a dietitian could argue with that?!?! For me the most rewarding part was getting to know about the life behind the face. For those of us with less day-to-day patient contact it is a reminder of our mission and of who our customers are.

I just returned from our walk with a vet. What a wonderful experience and I cannot wait for our next visit. We shared many life experiences and we had much to talk about as he was raised in Chicago and attended Catholic schools. I thanked him for walking with me and sharing some of his stories and then we hugged and I thanked him for his service to our country.

My veteran got outside in the sun and right away showed spunk in his step.

After our walk my veteran was saying very proudly, "I was walking the pups." He did a fantastic job of "leading" my dogs on his walk.

I was in the nursing home today and I overheard 2 different patients on 2 different wards talking to staff or other patients, "I am going on a nature walk today." If we ever think these kinds of things don't make a difference talk to those 2 patients.

**Celebration of National Public Health Week:
Empowering Americans to Live Stronger and Longer
April 4-10, 2005**

"Walk and Talk" – Thursday, April 7, 2005 (Rain Date: Friday, April 8, 2005)

Staff members are invited to sign up to be paired with a veteran from either an SGRC or MHO unit to take a 30-minute walk on Thursday, April 7, 2005 (or rain date Friday, April 8, 2005). Staff are encouraged to talk with their partner about the veteran's experiences in the military and to share one "healthy living" tip. The Medical Center Director has approved AA (30-45 minutes maximum) for staff members who volunteer to participate. It is planned to continue this throughout the summer months. Please watch for additional information.

Simple steps to follow:

1. Decide what time you would like to walk: 10:30 a.m. or 1:30 p.m.
2. Decide if you would like to walk and talk with a SGRC or MHO patient.
3. For planning purposes **reservations are requested** to be made by **12 Noon, Wednesday, April 6, 2005** as follows:

If you choose a MHO Patient - Send an e-mail to Janet Owens or phone her at extension 85755 indicating your name and time preference.

If you choose a SGRC Patient – Send an e-mail to Sheryl Larson or phone her at extension 84542 indicating your name and time preference.

4. On Thursday, April 7, 2005, (or rain date Friday, April 8, 2005) at the time you requested, report to

MHO Administrative Office – Building 131, Room 127 (Janet Owens)

SGRC Administrative Office – Building 134, Room A106C (Sheryl Larson)

You will be provided a unit to report to for your assigned patient.

5. Go to that unit and a staff member will have the veteran ready to walk and talk.
6. Walk and Talk with the veteran and return the veteran to the respective unit 30 minutes later.
7. Watch for future days to continue the Walk and Talk throughout the summer.

Thank you for your interest in your health, the health and wellbeing of our veterans and for being Proud to Care.

VISN 16

Name of Facility: Fayetteville VA Medical Center

Facility Point of Contact: Mona Benson, RN

Phone Number(s): 479-443-4301 ext. 5599

Number of veterans involved: 6

Number of staff involved: 6

Brief description of activities during PH Week: During the week prior to the event, we distributed fliers to staff and patient areas announcing the event and planned activities. On Thursday April 7th we held the "Walk and Talk with a Vet" program and announcements were made over the hospital PA system at intervals throughout the morning. We assembled a small packet of written materials (comprised of several of the information sheets included in the National Public Health Week Booklet) and provided these packets to the veterans who participated in the program. A member of engineering service was on hand to assist with taking the photos. The veterans enjoyed the walk and were appreciative of the health information they were provided.





VISN 17

Name of Facility: South Texas Veterans Healthcare System. Audie L. Murphy Division. San Antonio, Texas

Facility Point of Contact: Bertram Lindo, LMSW

Phone Number(s): 210 617 5300 ext 6049

Number of veterans involved: 35

Number of staff involved: 42

Brief description of activities during PH Week: Pre-contemplation Smoking Cessation Seminar. This seminar was an adjunct to the tobacco use cessation classes we had been presenting for the last eleven years. The seminar was presented by Dr. (PhD.) Michele HOOKER of the Psychology Service and Mr. Bertram Lindo LMSW, a health systems specialist in Ambulatory Care. The five stages of smoking cessation, which are Pre-contemplation, Contemplation, Preparation, Action and Maintenance were presented to veterans, staff, volunteers and families. In this new presentation we were trying to reach out to the personnel (be they staff, veterans, or 'passers by') who had no idea or desire to cease the use of tobacco. In the 'pre-contemplation' stage the individual has not yet made a mindful decision to stop. An interaction at this point could possibly assist him/her in making the decision for improved health. The presentation room was filled with tobacco use cessation brochures and posters from the World Health Organization, (WHO) the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, (CDC) and the American Cancer Society, (ACS). All hospital staff, volunteers, veterans and their families were encouraged to stop by the room, look at the displays and take information brochures and other resources home with them.

VISN 19

Name of Facility: Salt Lake City, UT

Facility Point of Contact: Stephen K. Harmon, Ph.D. and Rebecca Goldsmith, PA-C

Phone Number(s): (801) 582-1565, ext. 4261

Number of veterans involved: Estimate = 200

Number of staff involved: Estimate = 10

Brief description of activities during PH Week: The National Public Health Week posters and patient teaching materials were reproduced and printed by Medical Media, then distributed to all CBOCs for posting on display boards and individualized education. We have also used the materials with veterans in our local primary care clinics in Salt Lake City and posted the materials on our Main Lobby display board where over 100 veterans, staff and visitors see them each day.

VISN 20

Name of Facility: Southern Oregon Rehabilitation Center & Clinics, White City, OR

Facility Point of Contact: Karen Allen, RN, MSN

Phone Number(s): (541) 826-2111 ext. 3416

Number of veterans involved: 30 (There were others who participated but weren't signed up)

Number of staff involved: 32 (There were others who participated but weren't signed up)

Brief description of activities during PH Week: The "**MOVE** Walk and Talk with a Vet" took place on April 8th. Notwithstanding inclement weather a fair number of participants came out for the event (62+).

Posters were printed and posted throughout the facility in high traffic areas to invite patients and staff to join in this event. In addition to the posters, emails were sent to all staff members listing the health tips provided by NCP. Flyers with the NCP logo were distributed to the residential section areas for posting. Buttons were made for the veterans using the NCP logo. When they arrived to join the walk, their names were printed on them.

A mini health fair was held in the Theatre following the walk with informational tables such as blood pressure checks (before and after the walk); body mass index (with scales for weight checks), pet therapy dogs, etc. Wonderful, *Heart Healthy* refreshments were served. Pedometers and water bottles were given as prizes to all who finished the 1.25-mile walk. Bookmarks were passed out to all who attended. These were developed using the NCP logo and a couple of the *Heart Healthy tips* and then they were laminated for durability.



VISN 21

Name of Facility: San Francisco VA Medical Center

Facility Point of Contact: Carol Ceresa

Phone Number(s): (415) 221-4810 Ex. 3354

Number of veterans involved: 30

Number of staff involved: 8

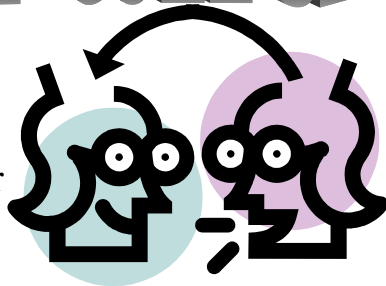
Brief description of activities: The initial informational display was provided in the lobby of the medical practice clinic, from 11:00AM-1:00PM, along with a promotional walk that was already in progress, related to a staff wellness/*Active for Life* collaborative effort. Both a group walk

and a sign-up sheet for staff to commit to individual “walks & talks” with a vet were promoted during Public Health week. In addition to the 14-15 “pairs” of staff/vets identified during Public Health Week, on April 22, a special event was planned with the corporate volunteers from McKesson Corporation. Veterans and McKesson volunteers had box lunches, outside at picnic tables, completed a nutrition focused quiz, discussed answers and then took an easy 30-minute walk.

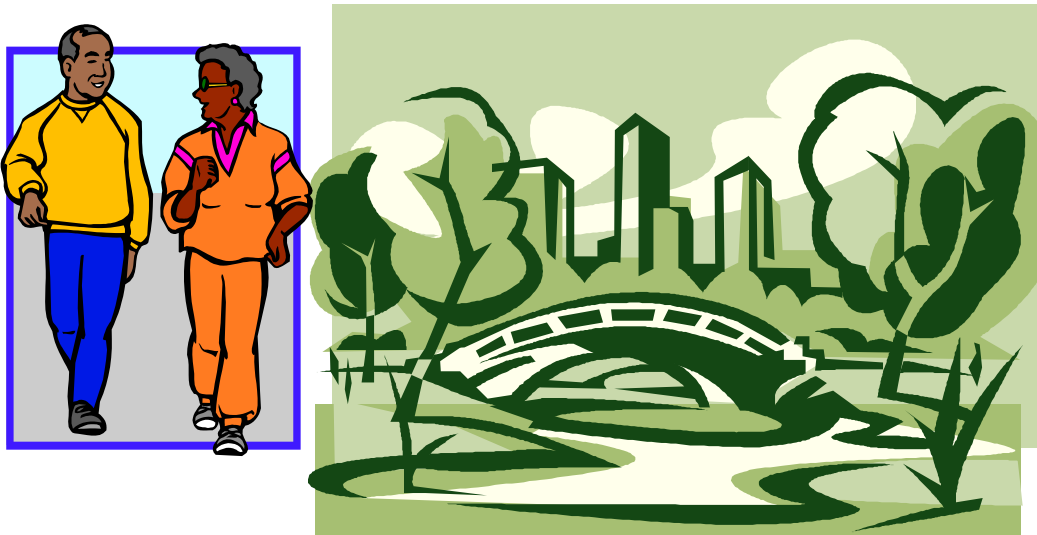
There is an on-going effort to utilize both staff and volunteers in the “Walk and Talk” initiative. (Flyer attached)

Walk and Talk

Live Stronger, Longer



In recognition of **Public Health Week**, and throughout April and May staff are encouraged to pair up with a veteran for a spring walk.



This wellness activity promotes staff and veteran verbal interaction and physical participation. Staff are encouraged to pair up with a veteran outside the facility for a spring walk. While moving, staff will share one preventive health tip with the veteran and the veteran will share a story with the staff person.

Planned areas for participation:

1. Active for Life teams – as an individual or as a small group
2. Interested employees at SFBVAMC and community clinics

Send a VISTA e-mail message- with your name and the veteran's name - to John Cannella when you have completed a walk and he will send you a certificate of Participation

Staff can identify veterans to walk with or can check with the Customer Service representative (415) 221-4810 ext. 6650 for a list of veterans who would like to participate.

Wellness Works – San Francisco VA Medical Center

VISN 23

Name of Facility: Sioux Falls, SD

Facility Point of Contact: Shirley Redmond

Phone Number(s): 605-333-6842

Number of veterans/staff involved: 85 veterans, employees, volunteers, and visitors

Brief description of activities during PH Week: The Director authorized employees 30 min. of AA to walk, and certificates of participation were presented to those individuals. Bottled water and healthy snacks were also provided.

In addition, we had a lobby display during the week (picture attached) highlighting the benefits of walking. Educational materials about choosing a healthy lifestyle were available.



VA Central Office

Point of Contact (VHA): Amy Hertz
Point of Contact (VBA): Janice Jacobs
Point of Contact (Assistant Secretary/Management): Mary Elliott
Point of Contact (NCA): Robin Cooper
Point of Contact (OCLA): Harriet Singleton
Point of Contact (HR&A): Nigel Collie
Point of Contact (OI&T): Paunee Grupe and Jennifer Duncan
Number of staff involved: Over 400

Central Office (CO) staff participated in the celebration of National Public Health Week by observing the theme “Empowering Americans to Live Stronger, Longer”. We challenged each other to begin living a healthier lifestyle by going for a 30-minute walk on April 4, 2005. Staff from the three Administrations (Veterans Benefits Administration (VBA), Veterans Health Administration (VHA), and National Cemetery Administration (NCA)) and four Staff offices (Office of the Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology (OI&T), Office of the Assistant Secretary for Human Resource and Administration (HR&A), Office of the Assistant Secretary for Congressional and Legislative Affairs (OCLA), and Office of the Assistant Secretary for Management (ASM)) participated. Over 400 VACO staff walked that day.

The VACO Champion of the walking challenge is OCLA. OCLA had the largest percentage of staff participants with approximately 41 percent of their Central Office staff who walked. The second and third runner-ups were NCA and HR&A, with 26 percent and 23 percent of their staff participating.

In addition, the Office of the Assistant Secretary for Information and Technology participated in the “Walk and Talk” with a veteran event. Five recently released OIF service members, currently working in OI&T, partnered and walked with key VHA leadership (Dr. Michael Kussman, Dr. Frances Murphy and Mr. Art Hamerschlag).

The true winners were all the VACO participants as they successfully demonstrated one aspect of healthy living. Several VACO staff have communicated that the walking challenge provided them with the incentive to “get moving” and they are continuing with daily walks ever since.



